town and country church

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town and country church

Purposes: To encourage cooperation among rural churches • to improve local church administration in organization, finance, education, community relations, and lay leadership training • to help develop a Christian philosophy of rural life embracing ethical issues in agriculture, social reconstruction, and government

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Cover

Winter comes to East Corinth, Vermont. David W. Corson photo, from A. Devaney, New York.

in this issue . . .

• One of the most creative and practical solutions in helping people stay on the land was the "Homestead Plan" developed by the Rev Eugene Smathers at Big Lick, Tennessee. This plan has been described by Dr. Ralph Felton in his booklet, "One Foot on the Land." Now in his twenty-eighth year as the pastor of Calvary Church at Big Lick, Mr. Smathers writes of the changes that have come about in recent days, and how these changes are modifying the "Homestead Plan."

The idea that rural children are more well adjusted than urban children has held sway as a popular point of view for considerable time, but is this assumption valid? Professor William Jamison, of the Theological Seminary of the University of Dubuque, calls attention to a number of recent personality studies which would indicate that the idea of better adjusted rural children is a myth. He points this out, not to disparage rural youth, but to challenge the rural church to a more dynamic program. It would seem that far too many rural churches have assumed their constituency was superior and so have complacently failed to develop an adequate program.

A great many of you will be sending and receiving Christmas cards with scenes painted by one of America's modern phenomena. Grandma Moses is probably one of the most famous of contemporary painters—yet she only started this career twenty-three years ago, when 77 years old. Dr. Benson Landis tells us of Grandma Moses at age 100 and of his visit with her when she was 91.

In an article, "Can Our Small Towns Survive?", Mr. Gustav Larson points out some of the lessons which small towns need to take to heart if they are to survive. Mr. Larson indicates why industry favors small towns, and where small towns can get help in planning development programs.

This month our "So You May Know" personality is introduced through a provocative message entitled, "Fear or Faith?" He is the Rev. Serge F. Hummon. ■

Contributors of articles to Town and Country Church speak for themselves and not for the National Council of Churches or sponsoring organizations.

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A NEW DAY in BIG LICK

by Eugene Smathers

Some Effects of Social and Economic Change as Reflected in the Life of Calvary Church and the Big Lick Community

• Standing on the steps of Calvary Presbyterian Church one looks across the head of a valley to Bear Den Mountain, rising high out of the Cumberland Plateau. The top of the mountain has been leveled off for the site of an omni-range station, whose beams guide speeding air craft safely over the hills. Daily the quiet of the once remote countryside is shattered by the thundering blasts of jets breaking the sound barrier. The road up Bear Den is steep and rough, barely passable except by jeep or truck, while not far away is a modern highway, leading from the industrial centers of the North to vacation spots in Florida. These are symbols of the rapid and drastic social and economic change which has suddenly swept a little backward pocket into the whirl-pool of twentieth century American life; change which has left no area of life untouched.

Here is an area which has jumped from the age of the hand-hewn cross tie and the bull tongue plow into a "new as yet nameless era," by-passing the gradual transition which had taken place in most of America during the first half of this century. It has leaped from isolation into the world; from simple forestry and primitive farming into a complex, pluralistic economy; from a super-rural into an urbanized culture; from backwoods trails to super-highways; from wagons to fleet motor cars with fins; from singing-school and square dance to TV; from superstition and folk-ways to science (Oak Ridge is not far away); from a fourth grade education to high school and college; from personal and family values to money and things; from scarcity to relative abundance; from dignified poverty to restless prosperity.

This social and economic revolution has created moral and spiritual confusion and uncertainty. Spiritual and moral understanding and vision have not kept pace with social and economic change, and the church finds it difficult to keep its ministry and program related to the needs of the time, remaining too often a static institution in a dynamic society.

Before indicating more specifically the effects of some major changes in the life of church and community, there is need for a brief description of the locale and of conditions prior to the revolution. The Cumberland Plateau is a narrow tableland extending from southern Kentucky through Tennessee into Northern Georgia and Alabama, and was one of the last geographical frontiers in the U.S. Cumberland County is almost in the center of this plateau, and was settled by a few families who dropped out of the westward migration which traveled roads leading through the area. After the migration ceased the settlers became isolated for a considerable period, and developed their own self-sufficient, frontier-type economy and its provincial culture.

From the time of settlement until the early 1930's little change or development took place. The pattern of residence was small, separated neighborhoods which centered around a church or school, a mill or country store, with vast areas of unsettled land between, with few contacts with

each other or with the county seat town. So within a self-sufficient region each little community was relatively self-sufficient.

Despite the many economic hardships and cultural disadvantages there were also positive qualities in the people and their way of life: native intelligence and ingenuity; family values; neighborliness combined with independence and self-reliance; recognition of the dignity and value of the individual—a person was valued for what he was rather than for what he had; attachment to land and homeplace, with the stability and security which comes from rootedness; common economic and occupational interests; leisurely enjoyment of nature, family, and neighbor; face-to-face personal relationships. They were a religious, Bible-centered folk, whose religious expression took revivalistic and pietistic forms, other-worldly and seldom related to daily realities. Church-going was as much for social reasons as for worship.

Big Lick, Tennessee, is an open-country neighborhood, fourteen miles from Crossville, the county-seat of Cumberland County, composed of sixty-odd families, one store, a consolidated public grade school, and Calvary Church. Through most of its history this small community, clustering around the store-post office, was an island surrounded by large areas of undeveloped woodlands, having little contact with other communities or the larger world.

Since 1921, Calvary Church has been the center of its life, first under the leadership of a woman community worker who served for seventeen years, followed by the writer who has been resident pastor for twenty-eight years. The changes which have occurred in this small place, with their effects upon the life of the church and community, are representative of what has happened to the whole super-rural Appalachian region, except that Calvary Church with its long history of concern for the whole of life has probably been somewhat more responsive to these changes than the typical rural church in the region.

Changes have come in such variety and with such suddenness that it is impossible to assess their relative importance, so no attempt will be made to do so here. Life is so inter-related that a break in the pattern of a culture at any point creates a disturbance in the whole. Let us begin, therefore, with economic change and development, and the effects which these are having on church and community life. During the late twenties timber was the basic industry, supplemented by subsistence farming, the methods of which had changed little over the years. In the early thirties developments took place which held promise that the Plateau would become a flourishing agricultural section: improved farming methods and the discovery of new crops adapted to soil and climate; the introduction of mechanized tools adapted to small farms; the opening of new markets, due largely to the quick-freezing process and better transportation; the contributions of governmental agencies and programs—Agricultural Extension, AAA, TVA, Soil Conservation Service, Farm Home Administration, 4-H and Future Farmers, and others.

People seeking security on the land during the depression years flowed into the county, doubling the population in the decade, the number of farms increased, and each community, including Big Lick, experienced the invigoration that comes from cross-fertilization, as new families moved in from other parts of the nation.

During this period when agriculture was developing, when everyone made his living, inadequate though it was, from the land, it was fairly simple for the church to relate the Christian doctrines of stewardship and vocation to daily life and to sponsor programs of study and action directed toward further economic improvement. Study clubs and a co-operative association for the ownership and operation of farm machinery which individual farmers could not afford made significant contributions to church and community. When all were farmers, working by the same time calendar, it was not difficult to schedule non-conflicting times for church and community meetings and projects. While the people did not have much cash they did have time and ability and were quite willing to contribute these. And it was by such contributions, in the midst of the depression, that a new church building and a health center were constructed. Common occupational interests and mutual economic needs strengthened the bonds of community, and simplified the application of the Christian ethic to the common life.

Then a trend, beginning during World War II, and accelerating since 1950, reversed the possibility of building a stable and prosperous local economy on agriculture alone. The small farm began to face increasing difficulty, and the opportunity for non-farm employment here and elsewhere was growing. Mechanization required longer operations. Small owners contracted their land to large operators. Others placed their farms in the Soil Bank or left them idle. Part-time farming increased by leaps and bounds.

Today not a single family in Big Lick makes its entire living from the farm, and a people who once had a bond of similar occupational interest now earn their livelihood in a multiplicity of occupations, their times schedules differ, travel to and from work consumes a considerable block of time. Some, especially older people and those with limited education, find it more and more difficult to secure employment at all. Mechanization continues to displace them. Part-time farmers who also have another job can find little time for family life or for church and community activities. Swing-shifts and Sunday work complicate the situation.

An increasing number of mothers are working, often for sub-standard wages. A car becomes a necessity, adding further strain on family finances. No longer economically self-sufficient, our local situation reacts quickly to the ebb and flow of the national economy. Let the building industry slow down and immediately it is reflected here by the lay-off of workers in the stone quarries.

The rural church is no longer primarily a farmers' church, so it must

Summer work camp busy on the new Sunday school building for Calvary Church.

adapt its program and activities to a changing situation. Time schedules have to be adjusted. Church and community work projects have to be planned for evenings. The teaching and implementation of the Christian doctrines of work, vocation, stewardship, love of neighbor, become even more imperative, and at the same time more difficult. Small churches do not have enough members of any given occupation to provide opportunity for group study of the implications of their faith for their daily work, yet this is essential to an effective ministry of the laity.

For some years Calvary Church has sponsored a homestead project, to assist young families to own their homes. Trustees of the Project buy land or houses and resell to families on long-term contracts. Originally these homesteads were meant to be farms. But with the change in the economic situation whereby non-farm employment has become essential, we face the problem of how these families can pay for their homes. So it becomes necessary for the church to be concerned with the economic development of the larger county-community, cooperating with other groups and organizations to this end. The problem can no longer be handled locally.

This fact that the neighborhood can no longer meet the needs of its people but is dependent upon the development of the larger community of which it is a unit suggests another area of change of great significance. No longer is the neighborhood the center of the peoples' major interests and concerns. The rural community is expanding to include many neighborhoods. The county has become the community with the county-seat town as its center. At this center are concentrated most of the service agencies, the major business activities, and the public high school. The spaces between the small settlements are being filled in, both physically and psychologically; boundary lines are becoming blurred and indistinct, whereas class lines are becoming more evident and of greater social significance.

People have more contacts with larger-than-neighborhood groups than with neighborhood groups. Simplicity gives way to complexity, as the larger community holds a variety of interests, and personal contacts and groups are changing from locality to common interest, with the resulting danger that we know no whole persons but only "functional fragments." There is an increase of interdependence without the growth of "togetherness." There is an almost never-ceasing birth of all kinds of social and civic organizations which compete for time and leadership, and often waste human and financial resources in un-coordinated and duplicated efforts. In this rural county of 18,000 population there are more than ninety social and civic organizations, excluding churches. Yet the majority of the citizens are non-participants in any real way, while a minority are over-burdened with responsibilities.

This enlargement and increasing complexity of rural community structure and organization has many

implications for the church. It requires the church to encourage community coordination and cooperation through such means as community councils or planning groups; to assist its members to an understanding and acceptance of their responsibility for bringing their Christian faith to bear upon the total life of the community by their participation in "secular" groups and programs; to be willing to share its leadership for other than specifically "church" activities.

Above all, the church as a fellowship concerned with the whole of life, composed of persons of both sexes and all ages, and ideally representing a cross-section of the people, has the opportunity for keeping vital face-to-face relationships of whole persons, and for deepening the awareness that the real stuff of life is this quality of human relationships.

One of the most frustrating problems which the rural church and community confronts is that created by the increasing mobility of our people. Since 1940 there has been a continuous out-migration of youth and younger adults to the industrial areas of the north. Many factors contribute to this: decreasing opportunity on the farm, lack of local non-farm jobs, war-time experiences, improved educational facilities. The population explosion which has rocked the nation is nothing new to our region, for the birthrate has always exceeded the national average, and during the thirties this was considered the seedbed of population. So there has always been some outward movement from the area, but not anything like present proportions. Big Lick now has 65 resident families, but during the last twenty-five years has lost more than 140 families to urban areas outside the state. In a class of 125 high school seniors graduating two years ago, probably not more than 25 remain in the county.

Since it is persons in the more productive age groups who migrate, there is an excess of children and older adults left in the remaining population. There is also a growing local mobility, between neighborhoods and toward the county seat. This constitutes a further drain upon the out-lying neighborhood and has resulted in a loss of its denominational homogeneity. Calvary Church is the only church in Big Lick and for many years was the church home of almost all the families. But as its families have moved out, they have been replaced in many instances by those of another non-cooperative denomination. The small rural neighborhood might have people and resources to support one church, but when these are divided between two or three, difficulties arise not only for the churches but for the community itself. Due to climate, natural beauty, and excellent medical facilities, there is a growing in-migration of older, retired couples.

The most perplexing problem created by this mobility is that of leadership. Youth comes up through church and community programs and begin to show potentialities for leadership; then as soon as they finish high school are lost. Young adults, who want to remain in the home community, accept responsibilities, find they cannot make a living locally, and have to move elsewhere; or they are transferred by an employer, and they are difficult to replace. If the minister is also mobile, the church faces a serious situation indeed.

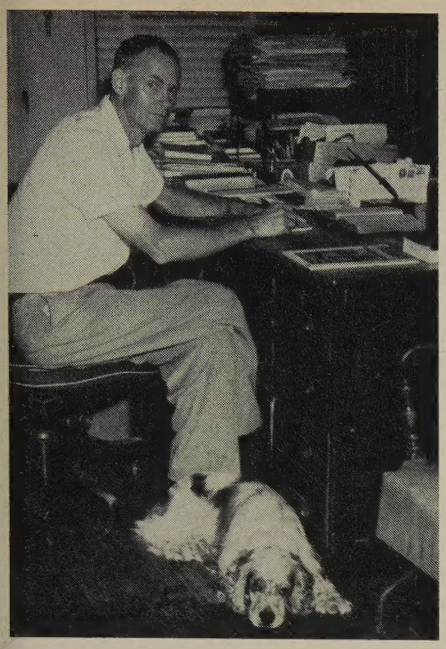
Yet the needs of children and older adults require a vigorous, responsible leadership. While not yet true of Calvary Church, there are many rural churches with no children or youth and very few middle-aged adults. Such depletion due to migration often leaves scars of defeat and negation. Perhaps one solution to this leadership problem is more effective use of the talents and time of older retired persons. At the same time it is well to recognize that a community with disproportionate numbers of retired people, with their conservatism and concern for security, is likely to have certain handicaps in developing progressive programs, especially in the areas of educational and economic improvement.

So the church can well afford to give more thought to the planning of programs of worship, study, and fellowship which can guide older people into realistic understanding of the changing community and motivate them for more progressive leadership in church and community affairs.

The intensification of the possibilities of denominational competition created by local mobility requires larger cooperation and unity, if the church is to be a positive, and not a divisive, influence and is to fulfill its mission in the community. And the out-migration requires that the local church and schools seek to guide and prepare youth for adjustment to life in urban society. This means, in part, that the rural church should endeavor to provide the quality of program which is found in the city church, so that the transition from one church to another will be less difficult.

Perhaps this also means that the urban church, especially those in areas of high in-migration of rural folk, should make a little adjustment in its programs. Certainly it demands the development of some cooperative strategy between town and country churches and churches in urban centers which will smooth the transition and assist rural migrants to find their rightful and contributive place in urban society, and in urban church life.

The development of such facilities as rural electrification, modern transportation, and mass communications has contributed to the breakdown of isolation and speeded the process of urbanization, even in the most remote rural neighborhood. Radio and TV have become mediums of cultural diffusion, reaching into almost every home. Provincialism is constantly bombarded with new ideas. Pressures of conformity tend to turn all out of the same mold. One of the disquieting changes taking place in our particular region is the disappearance of "characters," persons with unique qualities and quirks of character and behavior, whose peculiarities enriched the total life. Depersonalization creeps in, group conflicts become intensified, there is a breakdown in local community loyalty, and a decrease in neighborliness and mutual aid.



Mr. Smathers has been minister of Calvary Parish in Big Lick (United Presbyterian), his only pastorate, since 1932.

The transition from an economy of scarcity to one of abundance is not easily made, especially when the wants created and the promises offered by the latter do not find fulfillment. The compulsion to live beyond income often places undue stress upon family life and psychological well-being. It is a trying experience to know that one is poor in a wealthy society; he is an outsider, feeling not only that he is looked down on and rejected, but beginning to despise himself. And many of our people remain poor, despite the prosperity that has come. Many have always been relatively poor, but once they did not know it, and had a sense of belonging, of being "somebody."

These are some of social and economic changes which have come with such drastic suddenness upon a static society as to create almost a traumatic experience. The church in town and country does not have a ready-made program to meet all the problems and possibilities created by this experience, but it does have something even more essential. It is my conviction that the greatest need in this day of revolutionary change, and the greatest potential contribution of the church, is not a program but a *faith*—a faith that can inform and guide our purpose and programs. "What a faith gives us is not a clear picture of a defined goal, but a firm conviction about what really matters and from which we can act in every situation."

As we in the church look at the changes taking place in our community, there is need for a sort of "double-seeing," with eyes of faith as well as with eyes for facts. Objective fact-finding will be welcomed and used, but always as interpreted by Christian faith. In part at least, this means that the church must always ask of any social or economic fact: what does this mean to the dignity, worth, and total well-being of persons?

Perhaps the keys to the fulfillment of the mission of the church in changing rural America are the ministers. Ministers that are dedicated, trained, located, and sustained: dedicated "to the extension of the love of God and love of neighbor"; trained in the biblical faith, with an understanding of its relevance for the whole of life in our complex, modern world; located in the community which the church seeks to serve and deeply involved in its total life; and sustained long enough to be intelligently acquainted with the problems and possibilities and to make possible the development of plans and programs with vistas beyond the immediate moment.

There are many qualifications of an effective minister in the town and country community which are beyond the scope of this article, but the following would seem to be essential: (1) The ability to see life whole, recognizing that man is a body-soul unity, intimately related to and interdependent with the total life of his community, combined with an awareness of the sovereignty of God and of his redemptive purpose and the relevance of these for the whole of life. (2) The recognition that the Church, as God's Servant People, the Body of Christ, exists not for itself but to be a channel of God's reconciling love to the whole man in the total community of men. As Christ's body was broken for us, so the Church as the Body of Christ must be broken in service to its community and world. The whole Church is minister. (3) An awareness of the changes taking place in his community and the ability to interpret these in terms of personal and community well-being and of the ethical insights of the Christian faith. (4) The realization that God works through other than ecclesiastical channels to bring healing and wholeness into personal and community life, and a willingness to become acquainted and to cooperate with the "secular" allies of the church. (5) A deep and abiding appreciation of the values and possibilities of small community life, without romanticism or blindness to its weaknesses and dis-values.

The Church cannot escape involvement in this changing community life, for it is called to be God's Servant People, a "Colony of Heaven," in the real world where the decisions of life are made. This is so because God makes himself known in real history, and his will and purpose have to do with real history, the place where life is lived. He has placed us in communities and given us a work to do. He puts us here to "till the earth," to work, to keep life moving forward, to cultivate community. Jesus teaches us to pray for "our daily bread," because daily bread is important, the ways we get it are important, that all have enough is important.

All this relates to the community: to its economic arrangements and social relationships, to its stewardship of natural and human resources, to its sense of justice and fair-play, to its scale of values and ideals. How people live together is a Christian concern. The Christian life is the life of a spirit which moves within the changing structures and relationships of the community, criticizing, attacking, constructing, revising, experimenting, co-operating, as God gives light and as the means are available. It is a life of love which always confesses its own involvement in the problems and pains of community life and accepts exposure and risk for its redemption. ■ ■

Are Rural Children As Well Adjusted As Urban Youth?

by William G. Jamison

• Does a rural environment offer greater opportunities for personality development than an urban environment? Does living in the country help a child obtain acceptable personality traits, while the child living in the city is not apt to obtain them? And, particularly, does one's living on a farm offer certain advantages in personality growth?

Many churchmen hold the opinion that rural farm, rural non-farm, town, and small city areas do offer distinct advantages in character and personality growth. It is assumed that these areas offer more primary, face-to-face relationships, which tend to help the child to become resourceful in group situations, to become a leader, and to develop a greater sense of personal worth. The city child is lost in secondary-group relationships and has fewer opportunities for personal development. One argument for the vigorous retention of the rural church is the notion that the country itself offers unique opportunities for the growth of character among children.

These assumptions appear to be quite faulty, according to the results of several studies of personality development of farm, rural non-farm, town, and city children. The contrary appears to be the case, although one study among several shows farm children better adjusted. City children seem to show a greater degree of personality adjustment, as discovered by the administration of personality inventories. Even though personality tests are far from being perfectly reliable or valid, the data of several studies, on the whole, indicate that the old notion that the country offers the best environment for personality growth is faulty.

Mr. Jamison is associate professor of town and country program at the Theological Seminary of the University of Dubuque.

This does not necessarily suggest that the rural church has greater difficulties because of the environment in which it makes its proclamation. The evidence suggests that the challenge in its spreading of the Good News in the country is as great as it is in the city. It shows that the town and country church, just as the city church, must be a redemptive, dynamic fellowship rather than a sterile institution of the world and it must have a vital program of Christian nurture. It means we will have to remember that our rural constituencies are not "better" in the secular sense than our city cousins and the need for witness is as great. Inasmuch as rural children are not as well adjusted as urban children, and because a large number of them will eventually move to the city, the church, along with educational and social institutions, has a responsibility in preparing them for the trials of life. On the other hand, we must not make the mission of the church that of a character-building program or a personality-development institution.

The differences in personality development of rural and urban children are significant, but not alarming. In fact, the similarities in development are quite apparent. The conclusion drawn from the study of the results of the tests is that rural areas do not offer the opportunities for growth in social and personal relationships to the degree that they are offered in the city, and the differences are only in degree.

Most of the studies of the personality development of rural and urban children have used the famous California Test of Personality. It is used because it may be group-administered and it has been widely applied all over the nation.

These are some of the studies using that personality test:

1. In a study made by A. R. Mangus and others in Miami County, Ohio, conducted at the close of World War II, the prevalence of personal and social maladjustment as defined by the test was greater among open-country, non-farm, village, and city children than among farm children.[1]*

2. In 1946, Washington State College conducted a study involving 3,192 open-country, non-farm, farm, and small town children. Here the small town children did not manifest self-adjustment to the degree of the other children, but they all rated about the same in social adjustment.[2]

3. In 1947 and 1948, Roy Buck of Pennsylvania State University and this writer made a study of the personality adjustment of 4,147 high school sophomores who lived on farms, in rural non-farm areas, in small towns, in large towns, and in large metropolitan areas. The test was administered in nearly every county of the state. Urban youth showed significantly greater adjustment than did rural youth, with the rural non-farm youth giving the poorest showing. In almost every category of the test, the urban youth excelled. They rated higher in self-reliance, sense of personal worth, sense of personal freedom, feeling of belonging, freedom from withdrawing tendencies. Little or no difference was found in the area of family relations and community relations. In school relations only did rural children display a noticeable superiority.[3]

4. Sociologists at Iowa State University made a study of rural and urban children in Hamilton County, Iowa, in 1950, and found few, if any, differences. Later the study was repeated in Marshalltown, Iowa, and

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* See page 15 for footnotes.

Grandma Moses at Age 100

by Benson Y. Landis

Photo copyright Galerie St. Etienne, New York

• At Eagle Bridge, New York, a village in the northeastern part of the state, Mrs. Anna Mary Moses reached the age of 100 on September 7, 1960. Known affectionately in the art world and large sections of the American public as Grandma Moses, she received many messages. One came from a famous amateur painter who wrote: "All of us benefit from your sense of the joy and beauty in life." The writer said that he and his wife "will always be especially grateful for the paintings" of the farm at Gettysburg. The letter was signed by President Eisenhower.

Mrs. Moses, who started painting at age 77, is said to be the first painter of primitives to become famous in the lifetime of the painter. She lives in a rural home that might be regarded as typical of the homes that she has interpreted through her paintings.

Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York referred to the woman who has given the world many paintings as "our beloved Grandma Moses," and then summed up the many achievements of her career: Her accomplishments were "without benefit of teacher or art school or study. She painted—and today is still painting—for the sheer love of painting. Her success has astonished nobody more than herself."

Grandma Moses wrote *My Life's History* (New York, Harper and Bros.), first published in 1952 and reprinted several times later, and noted in TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH, May, 1952. There she records that the first Thanksgiving she remembers was during the American Civil War. In 1951, shortly after she was 91 years old, she received a social security card because she was one of the numerous self-employed persons covered by an amendment of the Social Security Act in 1950.

Grandma Moses tells that she painted when a small child, using fruit juices for colors. She kept those paintings for a long time, and many years later she looked with more than casual interest at these productions.

When her physician recommended less housework, she considered two alternatives: She thought that she might operate a poultry farm (one idea of light work, perhaps?), or she might try painting. She decided on the latter. When some of her early paintings were displayed in the window of a drug store near Eagle Bridge, an alert New York art dealer noticed them and undertook to distribute them, with the result now well known. A count of her paintings—1,200—was made a long time ago.

Mrs. Moses uses bright colors and produces "pretty" paintings. She paints largely from memory, and not by making sketches of actual scenes. She "paints down," she explains, simply meaning that she starts at the top of her subject.

Among the titles of Grandma Mose's paintings reproduced in color in *My Life's History* are: Sugaring Off, Catching the Thanksgiving Turkey, The Old Automobile, In Harvest Time, Christmas at Home, Covered Bridge, Snowballing, Mary and the Little Lamb, Thunderstorm, The Quilting Bee, The Old Checkered House, Moving Day, The Departure, Taking in the Laundry.

The verbal sketches in *My Life's History* reveal the countrywoman as well as the artist. They tell much about rural life in brief comments. When Mrs. Moses was 12, she went to work in the neighborhood as a "hired girl." She speaks glowingly of those who employed her, and also with infinite kindness took her into their family circles. Before she was 20, she never saw a doctor—when she was ill she was treated with herbs and roots.

When Grandma Moses was 91, my wife and I called at her home for a most rewarding conversation. She said to me somewhat sternly that she did not like people calling on her

(*Continued on page* 15)

Dr. Landis is editor of research publications of the National Council's Bureau of Research and Survey.

Can Our Small Towns Survive?

by Gustav E. Larson

A major objective of the Rural Development Program, now going forward in thirty states, is promotion of more job opportunities in small towns serving rural communities. Following is a condensed version of a speech on industry development in rural towns delivered before the Industrial Development Seminar of the Georgia Department of Commerce, Atlanta. Mr. Larson is Deputy Director, Office of Area Development, U. S. Department of Commerce.

• More and more small towns—(those of 10,000 population or less)—are jumping right into the middle of the fight for new industries. And each day it is the small towns which come up with new "gimmicks" which they believe will help in their push for new industry.

An industrial agent for a railroad serving the Southeast has reported that industrial prospects are continually surprised—and sometimes shocked—by proposals made by small towns to get them to consider their communities for new plant locations. The strength of this competitive drive for industry is shown by a Western community which recently scouted around and finally purchased outright a small Midwestern toy plant employing five hundred people. A few weeks later the same town shopped around some more and finally bought two small tool plants in California. The machinery, equipment, and such personnel as want to leave are being moved from the Midwest and California to New Mexico.

Some eight thousand area development organizations—community development corporations, local industrial groups, municipalities, and chambers of commerce—are now competing for new industry. This means that nearly half of our 17,000 small towns are working at least to some degree on the problems of job and community development.

What does all this small town hustle about area development mean? One meaning is that most small towns see both an opportunity and a need for developing jobs that will hold more young people at home. Small towns know too that more jobs will help the business already there. But it is frequently evident that they don't know what causes their economic troubles, what possibilities there are for strengthening their economies, or what kinds of area development programs make sense for them. Many small communities play only for the "big plant" and neglect the only real economic growth possibilities they have.

Do All Small Towns Survive?

Everyone knows that many small towns haven't survived in the past. Many thousands of small communities in the United States have virtually disappeared over the past one hundred years. Forty of 136 Mississippi towns in existence in 1900 did not survive to 1950. Our Western states, cutover areas, and coal regions can point to hundreds of "ghost towns" where workers and people left when the minerals were mined out, the price of silver dropped, or when the trees were gone. Abandonment of roads, railroads, waterways, and building of new transportation routes brought an end to many other thriving small towns. New highways and Henry Ford replaced dirt roads and the horse and buggy, and many small trading centers were left stranded as buyers drove on to the larger trade centers.

Just as many small towns have not survived in the past—many will not survive or grow in the future. Even now many small labor surplus area towns are faced with economic trouble because of consumer shifts from coal to other fuels, and increased mechanization of agriculture. These changes have closed mines and reduced the farm customers for small towns. Changes in markets, roads, and technology will continue to benefit some small commun-

ities but harm others. This is a cost of progress.

There is a lesson for small towns in all of this. Towns that died in the past didn't act to replace a dying industry with a new one. The workers moved on to other booming areas. Today there are bigger investments in small towns—in homes, businesses, streets, water supplies, churches and schools—so many people stay and push for area development. Unfortunately, it is the young who leave and this compounds the small town growth problem for the future. And this is the stage at which stock-taking should begin for the small town.

Are small towns growing or declining? We can't tell exactly until the 1960 Census returns are in. Many small towns are expected to show population gains from 1950-1960. But these will probably be towns chiefly located within the influence of larger city centers. County seats and university towns are also expected to show gains. A majority of the small rural area towns under 1,000 are expected to remain static in population or show some decline.

Why Do Some Small Towns Decline and Others Grow?

The size of the town in 1900 has had a great deal to do with its growth since then. In Mississippi, for example, if a town had a population of only 250 in 1900 its chances of becoming an urban place by 1950 were extremely slim. The odds against it were 100 to 1.

To explain this phenomenon let me quote from William C. Hallenbeck, an authority on the growth of American urban communities:

> The growth of cities has become a selective process. Only certain places grow. The basis of selection seems to be functional; that is, cities grow where cities are needed, not just because they are cities. In some cases this is a part of a regional population growth where more adequate and better distributed service centers are required. Also, places may be selected as the location of new activities of production or service and draw to themselves workers and their families and those to operate the facilities and services of community living.

What this means is simply that growth attracts growth. Hence larger towns have built-in economic growth advantages working for them. As a town develops more retail and other services, builds churches and schools, installs and expands water supply and sewerage facilities, and builds homes and office buildings, it attracts new economic activity, such as industries, because it can provide better services and facilities than its smaller town competitors.

The geographic location of a small town also strongly influences its economic growth potential. A region that is growing and going places will bring growth to many of its small towns too. But where small towns are located within a region determines growth potential too. Small towns near larger cities (ten to thirty miles) have better prospects for growth than do small communities which are more isolated from larger population centers. This is so because industries wish to be near the many services needed for plant operation and also to have access to the cultural and recreational advantages of the larger centers.

Some kinds of small towns had excellent records of growth in the past and should continue to grow in the future. Most county seats, state capitals, university towns, and some tourist towns have done well because government, education, and tourism have been growing industries. The excellent growth rate of county seat towns resulted in large part from the increased numbers of field offices and agencies of the federal government established in county seats. This brought more farmers into county seat towns and created an expansion of retail services as farmers stayed to shop. The farmers consequently bought less in centers formerly visited.

Does Industry Favor Small Town Locations?

A preference by industry for small towns as locations for new plants was recently reported to the Office of Area Development by four Southeastern states as follows:

State A: In 1959, seventy-five percent of new plants were near towns of 10,000 or less population. In capital investment, however, the total outlay for new plants or plant expansions in all small towns was less than the total for all larger towns of over 10,000.

State B: During 1959, 43 percent of all new plants located in towns of 5,000 to 7,000, 22 percent in towns of 10,000 to 20,000.

State C: Of 163 new plants established during 1957-1959, 35 were in towns under 1,000 and 79 in towns of 1,000 to 10,000.

State D: Thirty-five percent of plant locations or expansions occurred in towns of less than 2,500, 63 percent in cities of less than 10,000.

The foregoing figures submitted by state development agencies included home-grown industries, new branch plants or relocations from other areas, and plant expansions. Keep in mind that the majority of all new industries established in most states are small plants, employing less than fifty workers. It is these smaller industries which are widely scattered in small towns throughout a state; and it is small industries which probably offer the greatest hope for the future for increasing manufacturing employment in most small towns throughout this region.

But small towns, particularly those located near larger city centers, are also getting many large plants. To illustrate, fourteen out-of-state firms established branch plants in one Southeastern state during 1959. Of these, six located in large cities and eight in the small town size group. Out-of-state plants were most important from the total employment point of view. It appears from the information obtained that industries favor small town locations—the larger industries generally preferring small towns near larger population centers.

Why Does Industry Favor Small Towns?

Some of the reasons why industry favors small town locations for new plants, according to the Southeastern states queried, included:

Desire to avoid congestion, opportunity to take advantage of untapped labor, attractive wage rates, availability of workers who can be trained, easily high productivity of labor, desire to avoid large city competition for labor, and availability of large plant sites at reasonable costs.

Other small town advantages frequently cited were: more leisurely living, greater friendliness of small town people, small town desire for and interest in industry, and the existence of development groups ready and willing to do what they can to help an industry. Some of the companies reported that they wanted to become "part of a community" and this was considered easier to attain in a small town than in a large one. Some company management personnel felt that life was too short to spend so much time commuting to and from work.

Concerning disadvantages of small towns, industry cited the following:

Lack of trained workers, the nonexistence or shortage of auxiliary services and supplies, and the less than satisfactory transportation facilities. Industry also frequently made the point that, if any substantial number of workers must be imported, they may be dissatisfied with community facilities for education, culture, and recreation. Water, sewerage, police protection, and fire protection facilities were also considered by many industries to be inadequate in many small towns.

What Does All This Mean to Small Town Area Development?

What does all this mean to small towns that want to do something about economic growth? It means that most small communities will have an opportunity to obtain some kind of new job producing activities. Some small communities won't be able to prevent growth; most others will have to work for it. Also, opportunities for growth are of different kinds and of different degree, and there is a right kind of opportunity (or mixture of opportunities) to fit the town that wants to do something about its economic future.

Most small towns located within the influence of larger population centers will probably grow whether they want to or not. It is these small towns which have the best opportunities of acquiring the larger plants. *The problem of these communities is one of planning for orderly growth more than it is one of stimulating growth.* It is in communities of this type that industrial parks may be a real inducement to new industry because adequate sites are often not available in the nearby metropolitan areas.

Administrative centers, university, and tourist towns should continue to do well in the future because government, education, and tourism are expected to continue to be growing industries. *These towns should work to improve and expand activities which fortify their positions as administrative, education, and tourist centers.* It does not mean that they cannot develop industry, too. The same things that attract tourists attract industry. Many of the newer growth industries have large numbers of engineering and other professionally trained personnel who wish to live near or in education centers. Research and development companies and some of the growth industries employing large numbers of engineers reported to the Industrial Location Division of the Office of Area Development that they must locate their new plants where their professional personnel can take courses leading to advanced degrees, see an occasional play (at least twice a year), and commune with other engineers.

There are, then too, the small towns which are developing chiefly as "bedroom" centers for workers commuting to large cities or to larger small towns which offer industrial jobs. These "bedroom" towns are also acquiring more and more retired people. *Perhaps there is an opportunity here for some small towns that cannot get industry to increase local business opportunities by making their towns "specialists" in meeting the needs of retirement people and those workers commuting to jobs in other places.* Attractive low cost rental units, recreation developments, adequate medical services, and shopping areas are some of the advantages which could draw more and more such workers and retirement people to these towns.

Small towns in rural areas face the toughest job of area development. Here the roadblocks to growth may include isolation from larger population centers, nonavailability of skills, and lack of services and facilities which larger industries need. While occasional large plants will locate in or near these rural small communities, *the real hope for the future for these communities lies in the direction of small industries based on local resources and markets and development of latent tourist and travel potentials.* Keep in mind, however, that the future economic development of the rural towns can be strongly influenced by sound water and land development policies and programs. Tourist industry dollars (and industries, too) flow into and will continue to go into areas which can provide water.

Where Do You Get Help in Planning Small Town Development Programs?

Small towns do not have the area development know-how of larger communities, but they do have expert advice and counsel available from many organizations and agencies. These should be used to help plan and carry out area development programs. Here is a partial listing of such organizations and agencies:

- Chambers of commerce
- Private businesses
- Railroads
- Power and light companies
- Electric and telephone cooperatives
- Banks
- State colleges and universities
- State planning and development agencies and commerce departments
- Federal agencies
  - Office of Area Development, Department of Commerce
  - Bureau of Employment Security, Department of Labor
  - Small Business Administration
  - Rural Development Program, coordinated by Department of Agriculture ■ ■

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Are Rural Children As Well Adjusted . . . ?

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vicinity, with a revision of the test, and the urban children did somewhat better.[4]

5. In 1955 and 1956, Byron Munson administered the test to children in New York City, on Staten Island, in a town twenty miles from New York City, and in a rural area remote from metropolitan areas. He discovered that suburban children showed the highest degree of adjustment. Urban children were second, rural children third, and town children fourth in order of degree of adjustment.[5]

Studies using other personality inventories seem to show superiority of urban and suburban youngsters in most traits.

Thus, the evidence is on the side of the need to discard the notion that a rural environment is conducive to personality development. The data show that rural areas do not provide any advantage; in fact, most studies suggest a disadvantage.

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[1] A. R. Mangus, "Mental Health Problems Among School Children in Miami County, Ohio." Miami County Health and Human Development Project, Preliminary Report No. 2. Department of Rural Economics and Rural Sociology, Ohio State University. September, 1946.

[2] Hazel Cushing, "Intelligence, Personality Adjustment, and Physical Status of Rural Children in Relation to Land Class." The State College of Washington. Bulletin No. 489. July, 1947.

[3] William G. Jamison, *Factors Related to the Personality Adjustments of High School Sophomores, Pennsylvania, 1947-1948*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. The Pennsylvania State University. 1949.

[4] L. G. Burchinal, et. al, "Adjustment Characteristics of Rural and Urban Children," *American Sociological Review*. 1957. pp. 83-84.

[5] Byron E. Munson, "Personality Differentials Among Urban, Suburban, Town, and Rural Children," *Rural Sociology*. 1959. pp. 257-264.

Editor's Note: These studies seem to show that rural children need more help in the area of personal and social adjustment. This does not mean down-grading rural children, but it does indicate an added challenge to rural pastors. As they are aware of these added problems, they can gear their overall programs to help these youngsters become as well adjusted as urban or suburban children.

Grandma Moses . . .

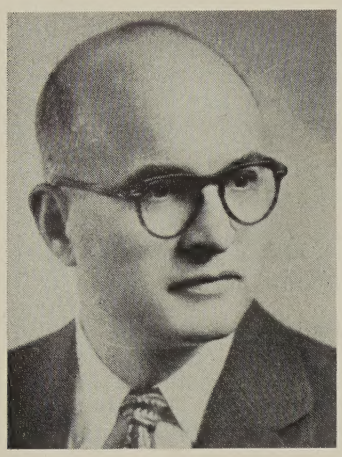
(*Continued from page* 9)

and then going away and boasting about having seen her. This served as a restraint on my enthusiasm for a while. But after about a year I wrote an article in TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH, December, 1952. I felt that it would at least be appropriate to say to those whom I could reach that Mrs. Moses had been an inspiration to us as to so many others.

The late Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who lived at Arlington, Vermont, just across the border, tells a delightful story about taking a young modern intellectual, who was absolutely sure that he did not like primitive paintings and never would, to talk with Grandma Moses in her home. After a short conversation, a conversion took place. On the way from the visit the dogmatic intellectual had mellowed and changed so much that he said he would rather own one of Grandma Moses's paintings than many a famous canvas that he could mention.

And thus, a salute and a tribute, to a grand countrywoman, who stands before the world famous for her fidelity to the common ways and tasks of the family farm, as well as for her art! ■ ■

so you may know



SERGE F. HUMMON

• The Rev. Serge F. Hummon was called to be secretary of Town and Country Church for the Board of Home Missions in September, 1958. The Town and Country Department represents the Congregational Churches in the United Church of Christ in the rural areas of the homeland United States.

Before coming to his present post, Mr. Hummon was assistant superintendent of the Wisconsin Congregational Conference from 1951 through 1958. In that capacity he counseled churches of the state in the securing of pastors and was adviser to Senior Hi Youth work and the Laymen's Fellowship.

Mr. Hummon has served the following parishes: the Hudson Larger Parish; the Jackson Association, Michigan; the Delta Larger Parish; the Gladstone Association, Michigan; the Arena-Blackearth yoked field, Wisconsin.

Mr. Hummon attended Union and Chicago Theological Seminaries and the graduate school in rural sociology at the University of Wisconsin.

Born in Texas, Mr. Hummon grew up on a farm in northwestern Ohio. He participated in 4-H Club work and the Methodist churches of the communities in which he lived. He was graduated from the Bryan (Ohio) high school and took his undergraduate degree from Ohio Wesleyan University. ■ ■

Fear or Faith?

by Serge F. Hummon

• The church in our town has a problem on its hands in communicating the Gospel. This task may be its main job, but in what attitude does it take hold of it?

Today, too many rural churches are living by their fears and not by their faith. Rural churchmen are fearful because they see the traditional forms of rural life evaporating. In their anxiety, they naturally dig in and hold on to what they have known. Forced to give up the post office and the one-room school, these leaders want to keep the one-room church. They identify this institution with a good past in which man had dignity in his small community.

The Gospel holds that the true church can never be identified with a particular kind of institutional form. This is a hard lesson for those who look backwards to learn. Nothing short of shock will change their thinking.

The new rural community will require a new concept of churching. The old divisive denominational approach of the nineteenth century will not reach people in the secular, mobile community of the future. Many of the people the church will be seeking to reach will be living on the assumption that religion is passe.

Hendrik Kraemer in *The Communication of the Christian Faith* points out that God sometimes uses "the world" in his sovereign way to shock the Church into a recognition of truth which issues in responsible action.

The shocker "the world" provides in the present situation is the breathtaking change which has left rural leaders in government, education, farm organizations and the church in a quandary. The confusion is marked by vitriolic battles over rural education, for example. Here educators, local school boards, and innocent bystanders join the fray. Perplexity exists as to government's role in agriculture. Why does not a clearer voice emerge from the farm organizations? They appear to be as interested in fighting one another as in leading rural Americans understandingly into a new era of town and country living. At the root of the problem rests befuddlement as to what the new values in the rural scene ought to be. The traditional institutions of the family, the farm, government, and education are being reshaped.

Rural church leaders will be required to think some new and difficult thoughts. They must disentangle the enduring Church from old institutional forms that are passing away. We mean specifically that the Congregationalists, the Methodists, the Baptists and the Episcopalians cannot continue to hold out on the main streets of a thousand little towns as they have done for a century, and hope to communicate the Gospel as effectively in the future as they did in the past. God is using "the world" through the social change about us to tell us something very important about the nature of the church. The sooner we are humiliated into understanding what he is trying to accomplish, the better.

Kraemer holds that the church is invited into "an Abrahamitic adventure," to go in faith to an unknown destiny. He says, "Here lies the deep difference with living fundamentally by tactics, which in itself is a respectable thing. But living by tactics means to remain, in spite of all intelligent adaptation, well established in its place, trying to make inroads into the world, but not wandering in faith unprotected, consciously and joyfully, to unknown goals."

Conforming to certain dying patterns of the traditional rural world is the way of fear. But the Church need not conform. In faith it can renew its mind and life, that it may prove God's will, "what is good and acceptable and perfect." ■ ■